

THE LAKE DAVIS UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2006

Newsletter for the Proposed Lake Davis Pike Eradication Project

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www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike

Environmental Impact Report/Statement Available For Review

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the US Forest Service (USFS) are pleased to announce that they have released the draft Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/EIS) for the proposed Lake Davis Pike Eradication Project. This is the next step in the environmental review process called for by CEQA and NEPA. The release of the document triggers a 45-day comment period during which the public is encouraged to review and comment on the document.

The DEIR/EIS presents an analysis of the proposed project: reservoir drawdown, beginning potentially as early as January 2007, to an elevation of approximately 15,000 acre-feet, followed by the application of liquid rotenone to Lake Davis and its upstream tributary streams between mid August and mid-to-late October of 2007. It also analyzes the impacts of an alternative at this same reservoir level using powdered rotenone as well as three additional alternatives that involve the use of liquid rotenone at different reservoir levels, a fifth nonchemical alternative that calls for a total dewatering of the reservoir and its upstream tributaries without the use of rotenone, and a sixth alternative called the No Project or No Action alternative. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the DEIR/EIS during the public comment period. They will be considered and responded to by both agencies in preparing the final EIR/ EIS.

The DEIR/EIS is available on the DFG website at www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike. Copies are also available for review at several DFG and USFS offices as well as several local libraries in Plumas County. Written comments are due to DFG or USFS on or before Oct. 16. For more information call the DFG at (916) 445-3584.

What's the Problem With Pike?

The northern pike is a predatory fish that has been illegally introduced to California. Pike are nicknamed "water wolf" because of their predatory nature and their voracious appetite for other fishes. They have impacted fishing at Lake Davis which is an important part of the local economy.

If pike should escape from Lake Davis, they could threaten many native fishes as well as the sport fishing economies and commercial salmon fishing industries in California and other western states.



DWR Containment System Upgraded to Prevent Pike Escape Through Outlet

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) owns and operates Grizzly Valley Dam that impounds Lake Davis. Lake Davis is part of the Upper Feather River Project in California's State Water Project system. The northern pike that inhabit Lake Davis have impacted the ecosystem and local trout fishery. They similarly pose a great threat to the downstream ecosystems and to the State Water Project. Northern pike are a non-native, invasive, fish species that aggressively feeds on other fish. If northern pike escape Lake Davis and expand throughout the Feather River system and into the San Joaquin and Sacramento River Delta, there could be severe negative consequences:

- State salmon fisheries could be further threatened,
- Threatened and endangered species listings could increase, and
- The extinction of listed species could increase.



Future location of strainers on Big Grizzly

All of these factors could have severe impacts to water management in the Delta and to State Water Project deliveries. DWR operates Lake Davis so that the water does not flow through the Grizzly Valley Dam spillway and inadvertently release northern pike or their eggs into downstream waters. DWR installed "graters" on the Grizzly Dam outlet pipes in 1996. The graters are sharp, steel grids that are fixed to the end of the outlet pipes. The graters kill most fish that leave the reservoir through the outlet pipes, but may allow smaller fish and eggs to escape. To further improve DWR's ability to keep northern pike in Lake Davis, DWR has designed and approved a project to upgrade the containment system at the outlet of Grizzly Valley Dam.

The Pike Containment System is being implemented by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and it is a separate project from the proposed Pike Eradication project.

This article was graciously provided by Michael Hendrick and Leslie Pierce of DWR.

The containment system will include new bar racks over the pipes that release water out of the dam and a series of strainers that will screen all water leaving the lake through those pipes (the outlet). The new bar racks will have 2-inch openings rather than the existing 4-inch openings. The strainers are wire-mesh baskets with a mesh size of 1.0 mm, and will be installed immediately downstream from Grizzly Valley Dam in Big Grizzly Creek.

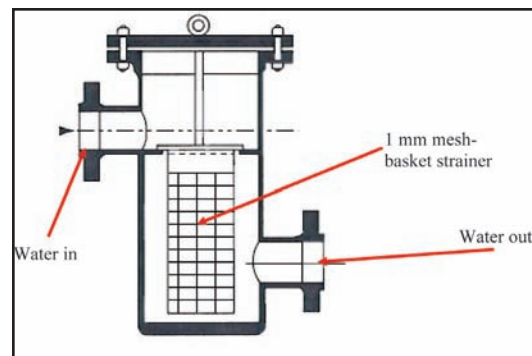
All water leaving the reservoir through the outlet structure will flow through the strainers. This will prevent all fish, regardless of their size (including eggs), from escaping Lake Davis through the outlet and entering Big Grizzly Creek. However, the strainers will not prevent northern pike from escaping over the spillway and they will not prevent a person from transplanting northern pike from Lake Davis into another body of water. DWR currently manages the reservoir to minimize the chance of releasing water over the spillway, thus minimizing chances of pike escaping Lake Davis over the spillway.

Construction of the new containment system began in early July 2006 and should be completed by early November 2006. With DFG's assistance, DWR staff will operate and maintain the strainers, including cleaning them daily.

DWR has obtained all of the environmental permits necessary for the project. The cost of the construction will be around \$800,000, and the total cost of the project after 3 ½ years of operation will be around \$4.26 million. Funding for the project is from Proposition 50 through the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program and from DWR State Water Project funds.

The Notice of Determination, the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study, and the Monitoring Plan are available on the Internet at:
<http://www.watershedrestoration.water.ca.gov/fishpassage/>

If you have questions about the project, contact Leslie Pierce at (916) 651-9630 or lpierce@water.ca.gov.



Checkpoint Nets Live Pike

Steve Martarano, DFG Supervising Information Officer

When the six-hour pike checkpoint at Lake Davis wrapped up on Saturday, May 20, the results were “disconcerting,” as Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Capt. Sherry Howell put it.

A total of five anglers were transporting pike when they were stopped at the checkpoints. But more troubling was that two of those pike were still alive. Because this was the first checkpoint of its kind in almost 10 years at Lake Davis, both anglers with the live pike were given a stern lecture on the dangers associated with live pike leaving the reservoir, and no citations were issued. All five of the pike were confiscated. Anglers catching a pike at Lake Davis, the only body of water in California pike are known to exist, are instructed to kill it immediately and then remove its head. They are then asked to turn it over to a local DFG official – either at the reservoir or Portola office – or at one of two participating local stores (see below).

“There are a lot of things that can happen – all of them bad – when people bring a live pike out of the reservoir,” Howell said. Two locations were posted to flag vehicles headed out of the reservoir from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. A total of 129 vehicles were screened, or passed through the locations, and 71 were inspected due to fishing activity. In addition to the five pike that came through, anglers possessed a total of 30 trout.

The checkpoint netted other, non-pike activity as well. Two citations were issued for marijuana possession, and a possible drug lab was discovered at a boat ramp after the suspects saw the checkpoint and attempted to dump the evidence.

Other checkpoints are scheduled in the future.

Editor's Update: Despite multiple news reports on the checkpoint in May, three weeks later in June at the Lake Davis Fishing Derby, nearly three quarters of the 16 pike turned in by anglers were either intact or alive. We are continuing our efforts to educate the public that anglers need to immediately kill any pike caught.

What to do if you catch a pike

1. Kill it immediately and remove its head. Do not throw it back.
2. Within 24 hours turn the head and body into a DFG representative or at a designated collection station (Portola DFG office, Grizzly Store or Dollard's Sierra Market) or call the Cal-Tip number at 888-332-2258.
3. Never transport pike or any other live plant or animal from one body of water to another.
4. Violations are subject to imprisonment (6-12 months), up to \$50,000 fine per violation, revocation of licenses, liability for damages to property or fisheries, and all costs for public and private response, treatment and remediation resulting from violations.
5. Reward: Up to \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of violator(s).



Above: The first live pike that came through the checkpoint was in a cooler.

Below: Warden Adams screens a car on Grizzly Road as it enters the checkpoint area.

Photos by Steve Martarano.



Public Workshops Respond to Public's Demand for More Information

There was an inadvertent omission of a comment from the scoping report. The scoping report includes an erratum from June 1 that includes the comment. The erratum can be viewed at www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike.



The workshops gave people an opportunity to ask questions and to be heard.



This summer, the Department of Fish and Game and the US Forest Service conducted five informational workshops to encourage citizens to review and comment on the newly released Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement for the proposed Lake Davis Pike Eradication project. These workshops also provided a valuable dialog between the public and recognized experts on pike eradication alternatives. Workshop topics included project alternatives, the facts about rotenone, groundwater issues, the economic impacts of pike and the proposed forest closures.

We also encourage you to attend one of the two public hearings on the EIR/EIS on Tuesday, Sept. 26, from either 1 to 4 PM or 6 to 9 PM at the Portola Station Baptist Church (171 S. Gulling St., Portola).

Additional public hearings are scheduled for the same time periods on Oct. 5 at National University in Sacramento.

*Update on
the
Proposed
Lake Davis
Pike
Eradication
Project*
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